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IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INFANTRY OF 2010

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Over the past year, remarkable changes have occurred in our country which have had a significant impact on the future of our Army. Unparalleled public demand to balance the Federal budget has shut down our Federal government twice in the past six months as Congress and the President debated the details of how to do it. However, both sides agree that a significant reduction is required in the Defense budget. Recently withdrawn from Somalia, and Haiti, the Army now has 20,000+ soldiers in Bosnia.

Peacekeeping and Humanitarian efforts in support of the UN have ushered in a variety of different missions. As the Army marches into a new era, it can no longer afford to focus only on the most dangerous threat at the exclusion of the most likely use of ground forces. This paper addresses why our Infantry force will be forced to restructure, discusses implications of the restructuring and offers some options to contribute to the discussion of the evolving nature of Infantry in the year 2010.

Our world is changing fast. Less than six years ago, President Bush announced the emergence of a New World Order, "a new era, free from the threat of terror, stronger in pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace, an era in which the nations of the world can prosper and live in peace."¹ Instead, we quickly devolved into a conflict-prone world, more complicated, volatile, and much less predictable. Some refer to it now as a New World Disorder.

Not only is the world changing but also our probable responses to crises are changing. Less than one year ago, Carl Builder observed that "For the foreseeable future, the most challenging tasks facing the American military may be those types already on its plate: a series of crises and lesser conflicts that will call for 'eyes in the sky' rather than a battle for air superiority; for constabulary duties rather than a massive armored assault; for the evacuation of noncombatants rather than control of the seas."²

Since the resounding success of Desert Storm, many believe that the prospective scale, as well as the actual frequency, of high intensity war has been reduced. This may lead to a reduction in the volume of capital-intensive firepower. Instead, the number of situations where the foot soldier is the military instrument of choice is expected to increase. Indeed, these emerging new missions imply a new lease on life for skilled infantry and special operations forces.³

What events will cause us to modify our future infantry structure? How might we restructure the infantry of 2010 to respond to a change in our National Military Strategy, a significantly different threat, and a 20% reduction in our Army budget? This paper seeks to contribute to this discussion by stimulating thought about why and how we should change. Although alternatives are discussed, they are necessarily general and designed to generate discussion.

Let's begin with three assumptions: First, a diminished threat and a reduced budget will lead to cuts in infantry force structure. Second, the Army will be forced to accept previously unacceptable risks in the near term (5-15 years). Third, new ideas and alternatives must come from the bottom up. Guidance from top leadership will not be forthcoming.

Let's look at the context that has driven these assumptions. As we enter the next 15 years, the Army must deal with two radically different variables: a changing array of threats and a rapidly diminishing budget. Our role as the world's superpower is unchallenged. We have no peer competitor. TRADOC Pam 525-5 predicts that our most likely threat will be regional threats along with a variety of intrastate crises.⁴ The events of the past four years bear this out, with deployments to Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia. With increasing political pressure to balance the budget and focus internally on domestic issues and with our presumed military superiority, prospects for future defense budgets seem bleak.

These two variables will likewise lead to a change in our National Military Strategy. Senior leaders are already privately acknowledging that the current strategy of maintaining the capability to fight two nearly simultaneous MRC's is untenable. Current end strength and structure do not adequately support this strategy. More reductions will lead to the defense train wreck predicted by Don Snider.⁵ Most predict a change to preparation for one MRC or a wholly revised strategy. Military leaders like Colin Powell initiated the advance work for such change by moving us from a threat-based orientation to a capabilities-based orientation.

Dwindling resources are presenting the Army with a funding dilemma among three broad areas: near-term readiness/training issues, long-term modernization/capabilities issues, and force structure reductions. Echoes of the "hollow army" of the 70's remind leaders of the perils of drawing down and restructuring. Political and operational realities do not allow a reduction in current readiness and training. Long-term modernization is already under-funded. FY96 allocates only 10 billion to force modernization, although everyone agrees that 14 billion is needed.⁶ And there are no indications that the shortfall in funding will be reversed in the near- or long-term future. So a revised force structure is the only other alternative, there is no slack here. Senior Army leaders openly admit that we are stressing the 10 division force with our current end-strength of 510K, to say nothing of our targeted end-strength of 495K by the

end of the current fiscal year.

Clearly, infantry force structure will be reduced along with all other structure. To suggest otherwise is naive. We will be forced to assume risks in the near term, with no peer competitor on the horizon. Top-down planning guidance will not be forthcoming for three reasons: First, the long-term future (15 years and beyond) is filled with much uncertainty. The world may change dramatically two or three times before then. Volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity do not prompt senior leaders to provide good planning guidance. Second, the effects of emerging technology on warfare are still uncertain, although they look very promising. And improvements are increasing exponentially every two or three years. Third, public examination of defense alternatives at a time when Congress is pressed to reduce spending poses grave political risks.

Without top-down planning guidance, we must generate ideas, alternatives, and serious discussion in the units, at the school houses, and at TRADOC. We must look for innovative ways to shrink the size of our force, while at the same time increasing the diversity of our capabilities. And we need to do this ourselves before Congressional legislation forces our compliance, just as the Goldwater-Nichols Act did in the area of jointness.

Let's look now at the events that are forcing us to restructure. First, consider the emerging threat. We must explore the sources and location of future conflicts, as well as the changing nature of the likely threats. Then we must examine

the implications of force structure reductions for the infantry.

We do not have a systematic method of long-range forecasting or an established group of analysts charged with long-range forecasts.⁷ However, there is consensus that we should locate the sources of future conflict by looking at and measuring trends in the four major elements of power: economic, demographic, military, and psychological. Next, we should anticipate power shifts among traditional adversaries.⁸ The answers to these questions begin to tell us where and why conflicts will occur that can threaten our vital interests. Alan Goodman and Eric Vardac offer plausible sites and causes of future crises: the Korean peninsula, caused by widespread instability in the north; the Andean ridge countries vs. narco-insurgents, fueled by national instability and uncertain power position of the governments; ethnic turmoil in the Balkans, leading to greater regional instability; Iran-Saudi Arabia-Iraq, brought about by instability of Iran and Iraq vs. the survival of the Saudi regime; Israel vs. Arab coalition, concerning Israeli survival and Arab prestige; and the Kurds-Armenia-Turkey-Azerbaijan-Iran-Iraq regional instability, complicated by religious and ethnic strife.⁹

Although this general forecast is helpful, its projected major trouble spots do not include many of America's more recent concerns, such as unrest in Haiti, humanitarian and ethnic problems throughout the African continent, possible Cuban transfer of power, and growing involvement in numerous United

Nations collective security activities.

Without a doubt, our readiness for large-scale interstate conventional combat is indispensable to our security. But is such general preparation enough? Or does our planning and intelligence analysis need to move beyond this Cold War mindset and its preoccupation with standing conventional forces? Jeffory Record postulates that we are entering an era in which the predominant form of conflict will lead to smaller and less conventional wars waged mostly within recognized national borders. He speculates that state disintegration in Africa, the collapse of the Soviet empire, and the likely spread of politically radical Islam will result in U.S. military commitments in complex and difficult situations. Additionally, America will continue to be pressured to participate in peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, and nation-building operations.¹⁰

What then is the nature of the threat that we are likely to face on the lower end of the spectrum? Three paradigm shifts affect the security of nations in which we have some kind of interest. First, there is a move from external aggression to internal instability. Second, there has been a dramatic rise in the amount of religious strife, particularly of Islamic revivalism. And third, economic issues are beginning to override traditional strategical issues.¹¹

Multidimensional factional conflicts offer another example of the evolving nature of the threat. Such conflicts feature

numerous, ever-changing alliances--with no simple way to distinguish the competing sides and no common ground among them.¹² Recent examples include Lebanon, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Bosnia. In some respects, Vietnam was the precursor of this type of conflict wherein soldiers could not always ascertain the identity of the enemy.

John Jandora recently wrote that OOTW missions for our Army "will probably involve unilateral or multinational efforts to buttress friendly regimes, thwart criminal organizations or criminal regimes, relieve the adverse effects of natural or economic disasters, restore or maintain peace in an area or country and protect Americans or allied personnel."¹³ He further observes that three particularly difficult threats are posed by insurgents or factional forces, large criminal organizations, and an armed populace.¹⁴

Ralph Peters draws a distinction between our kind of soldier and the warriors that we are increasingly likely to encounter. By his definition warriors are "erratic primitives of shifting allegiance, habituated to violence, with no stake in civil order."¹⁵ Fighting against warriors requires a two pronged approach: an active campaign to win over the populace, coupled with unmitigated violence against warlords and their warriors.¹⁶ We experienced the difficulty of this kind of situation in Somalia; we may be frustrated again by it in Bosnia.

What implications can we draw from all of this? Although there are trouble spots on the horizon that demand consideration

of large-scale conventional war as our most dangerous threat, we have no peer competitor now nor in the near future. We are outspending our closest 10 competitors combined.¹⁷ A large conventional Army depends on a peer competitor. CINC's will continue to insist upon worst-case consideration of their threats, but such prudence is to be expected. This is how they compete for the allocation of scarce resources. It reflects how they view their jobs. It is traditional post-World War II military thinking.

The most probable use of ground forces in the next 15 years will be in low-intensity conflict and OOTW. Such operations require a smaller force with a much wider range of capabilities. The multi-dimensional nature of our involvement--combined with such amorphous evolving threats as insurgents, large criminal organizations, armed populaces, and warrior bands--adds a degree of complexity that exceeds our current capability. Perhaps it is time to accept risk and consider reorganizing part of our infantry force to deal with this emerging threat.

Let's look now at the second major event forcing the infantry to restructure, a plummeting defense budget. What is causing it? How serious is it? And what are its implications for Infantry structure?

Our national debt is expected to reach 6.7 trillion by the year 2000; interest on it will account for 16.7 per cent of total budget outlays.¹⁸ "Great Society" programs initiated in the 1960's with minimal initial impact have combined now with other

entitlements to become the fastest growing and largest segment of federal budget. Our current political climate indicates nearly unanimous acceptance of the need to balance the budget, so growth in entitlement spending and interest payments have created extroadinary pressure to reduce the defense budget. Of course, this pressure has been fueled dramatically by the end of the Cold War and the loss of a credible threat. Thus many are arguing that social spending should remain constant or increase at the expense of defense.

Jim Hanlon notes that the USSR may have killed itself economically trying to maintain parity with the U.S. Its efforts to counter our Star Wars thrust finally broke its back. But we were a real potential threat. Now we are positing a shadow threat: we are anticipating an adversary technologically superior to us, then planning to counter it. We could lose, as the USSR did, because we exhaust ourselves preparing to engage, not a real enemy, but a hypothetical enemy. Perhaps our best defense in the short run is a stable economy and a balanced budget. After all, we defeated the USSR by causing them to spend so much militarily that they had nothing left to satisfy pressing social and domestic needs--thus they imploded.¹⁹

Many would say that we are at the tail-end of this reduction in defense spending, since in 1985 the defense budget commanded 26.7% of the total budget, whereas in 1995 defense received only 20.7%.²⁰ They argue that the budget will remain relatively constant through the next 10 years. But Clinton's

recent plan to balance the budget by 2005 recommended additional reductions in defense outlays during the period FY96-FY05 of 20% in real terms. And Republican plans to balance the budget offer no more money.²¹

What impact would this 20% reduction have? It means the defense budget would drop to 200 billion in 1996 dollars. Using the Army's traditional percentage of 23%, that means the Army budget would drop from approximately 60 billion to 46 billion. It means that the National Military Strategy would have to prepare for only one MRC, not two. Or it would simply call for other, lower standards. Most everyone agrees that this means a 20% structure reduction, or an eight division force. Our senior leaders privately say that although they will fight to maintain 10 divisions, the changing National Military Strategy and budget reductions will force them to draw down to eight divisions after FY97, unless additions are made to current budget projections. In fact, our senior leadership are wrestling now with major decisions driven by the five-year POM submission (FY99-FY03), due in May 1996.

Some would argue that budget problems should be treated only as constraints--that they should not drive our strategy. But the Congressional Budget Office and every private think tank in Washington would suggest that our strategies should take budget realities into account. Until we face a major crisis or war, a continued decline in the defense budget is a reality.

This reality has four significant implications that will

drive infantry restructuring. First, as Don Snider has pointed out, "the current defense is not affordable as designed, and current underfunding is causing obsolescence at an alarming rate".²² Second, a changing threat and a reduced budget will trigger a change in our National Military Strategy. Third, the Army will be faced with three alternatives to deal with a significant reduction in funding; either reduce structure, take money from training/readiness, or decrease modernization. Given these options, the Army will choose to reduce structure which will directly affect the size and composition of our infantry. Fourth, the decision to reduce structure will likely lead to at least a 20% reduction in our 10 division force.

Given the implications of a new emerging threat and a declining budget, some of the options that the infantry should be considering for structure savings to save money include: redefining/streamlining the current structure; relying on technological improvements brought about by Force XXI; redesigning two separate forces--one for medium to high intensity, the other for low-intensity/OOTW; and relooking the active/reserve component mix.

In December 1995, Army leaders were to have made a decision on which of three options it was selecting for its future force structure. The idea was to examine alternative options to see how much money could be saved by restructuring. But the consensus of the Army's four-stars appears to be to leave the light divisions as they are and to reduce the end strength of the

heavy divisions to approximately 15K. In many respects, this reduction became a salami slice approach, with tank, infantry, and artillery battalions all losing a company/battery from their current heavy structure. Thus the infantry lost a second company in the past two years, having recently lost their antitank company also. This proposal will generate a net loss of approximately 20,000 spaces out of the six heavy divisions, if implemented. Overall, this is a four percent reduction from a base of 495K. Although an excellent start, this reduction falls far short of the 20% reduction (99K) anticipated in this paper.

Even though the light infantry divisions were left untouched, some minor changes could improve the all-around versatility of these valuable organizations. COL Peter Herrly suggests that lethality, tactical mobility, and sustainability could all be improved at low cost by re-examining the out-dated motorized concept.²³ Tactical mobility and sustainability could surely be dramatically improved simply with the addition of HMMWVs to at least one brigade in each division. This increased mobility would have proven very helpful to the 7th Infantry Division during Operation Just Cause and to the 10th Mountain Division in Somalia.²⁴ Improving the versatility of light infantry divisions argue for leaving them in the force structure rather than heavy divisions which are more expensive in structure and operating costs.

But salami slices from current units are not sufficient to draw down substantially. They can lead us illogically down the

wrong path of merely maintaining a smaller infantry, when we really need a smaller and different infantry. Perhaps, we should consider organizing our infantry based on an Army end-strength of 400K, and then add additional structure in the event of a build-up.

Many would argue that the Army already has in place a process for changing itself to meet the threats of 2010. Force XXI is indeed a great mechanism for change. But it is a process, not a destination. Its goal is to leverage emerging technology of the Information Age to meet the dynamic and uncertain challenge of the future. The Army is far ahead of any other service--the cutting edge of innovation within the Department of Defense.

But the current thrust and future of Force XXI raises several issues. Unless these are addressed, the future of Force XXI could be in jeopardy. Or worse, Force XXI could lead us to create a force designed for the last war, not the one we are likely to fight next.

The first issue is that our effort in Force XXI is not tailored for the total threat. TRADOC PAM 525-5 says "most of the conflicts involving the U.S. Army will be OOTW or low-intensity conflicts, as few states will risk open war with the U.S."²⁵ Yet the entire scope of Force XXI operations presented in TRADOC PAM 525-5 assume conventional combat operations. MG Coffey, Commander of the 4th Division in which the EXFOR is embedded, acknowledged this when he stated that Task Force XXI

(one of the culminating events in our Force XXI process designed to evaluate new force structure) was focused entirely on mid- to high-intensity warfare.²⁶

Secondly, Force XXI is focused primarily on the most dangerous threat, devoting little attention to the most likely involvements of American forces. It is focused on warfare against a complex, adaptive army of the future, even though America has no peer competitor now or in the foreseeable future. Thus it overlooks present or near-term threats. While it recognizes the potential impact of emerging technology, it does not balance this concern with the perceived threat. In an era of sharply diminished resources, the public may ask our military to do things it does not want to do. Even though the military may design its force one way, the public may only fund it according to their idea of how it should be used.²⁷

Although some would argue that it is too soon to tell, a critical analysis indicates that the Force XXI process is unlikely to produce significant force structure savings. I have noted that recent trimming of the heavy division resulted in only a four percent reduction. There are no indications that there will be any forthcoming reductions in the four light divisions, or anywhere else in the Army.

Finally, a lack of funding may derail Force XXI by FY 97-98. Army leadership has already fallen away from initial plans for a Division XXI exercise. Instead, we now plan to do it entirely as a simulation exercise. With bleak prospects for additional

funding in the next five years, additional shortfalls should be expected.

Now, let's look at the third option, that of designing two separate force structures. The Army needs two different capabilities for coping with future conflicts. To confront regional superpowers, we need a traditional force that is rapidly transportable with sufficient fighting power to cope with numerous and heavily armed opponents. And we need small, light, mobile forces suitable for a wide range of low intensity missions as well as operations other than war. Our current strategy of assigning all missions to all divisions is no longer acceptable. We need further specialization.

This option proposes the total reorganization of our Army into two separate and distinct types of forces: One designed for fighting a mid-to high-intensity war (MRC-high) and another designed for the low end of the conflict spectrum (MRC-low). Additionally, this option would be based on the following three assumptions: budget realities will force a 20% force structure reduction; predictions of future conflict will demand a more robust capacity for low intensity/OOTW operations; and our civilian leadership will accept much higher risk in high-intensity operations.

This reorganization must be completed carefully, because American creditability throughout the world depends on our ability to put "boots on the ground." Our willingness to fight and apply overwhelming force makes us the supreme superpower that

we are today. During the process of redesigning our current two MRC strategy, there could be challenges that demand a response. Any option that places our nation at an unacceptable high degree of risk will not be considered.

The MRC-high organization would continue the on-going initiative to reduce the size of the heavy division by four percent. To free up additional force structure savings, the number of heavy brigades in the active component would have to be reduced by four or five, and an entire heavy division may have to be removed. Probably the best solution is to shift some of our costly heavy combat capability to the Reserve Component. In the future, emerging technology may allow us to also eliminate one of our traditional command and control headquarters, either Corps, Division, or Brigade.

Although this significant reduction in the size of our heavy forces assumes a risk unacceptable in the Pre-Cold War era, it nonetheless offers benefits for the MRC-high force. First, the structure reduction will free up more money for our on-going modernization effort. Rather than backing off from our Force XXI initiatives, we can continue with a full court press to leverage this emerging technology to digitize the force. It would also allow us to begin the acquisition process to place the most promising technology throughout the force. We can place additional emphasis on the rapidly increasing role of Army aviation in ground maneuver. We can experiment as we look for leap ahead technology designed to replace our present-day main

battle tank, 30 year old howitzers, and infantry fighting vehicle platforms. And lastly, the creation of an MRC-low structure will free the heavy forces from such frequent distractions as Bosnia, which undermine readiness and erode the individual and collective skills of our units. This has the added benefit of reducing risk in the short to mid-term.

The MRC-low organization would be unlike any structure currently in existence. The combat dimension of the force would shrink, but the diversity of capabilities would increase dramatically. "The depth in mainstream forces would be reduced in order to increase military transport, intelligence, surveillance, communications, military police, civil engineering, psychological operations--in short, all those military capabilities that have been so hard pressed around the world as our Cold War forces have drawn down".²⁸ Carl Builder goes on to say that perhaps this concept would require us to move more of our support capability out of the reserves and shift more of our depth in combat forces for a big war into the reserves.²⁹

Unique and varied missions such as humanitarian relief, refugee and population control, counternarcotics, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and other low-end spectrum activities require the creation of specially designed forces. It would be designed around a greater need to project a "presence" on the ground, rather than to project lethality. Therefore, it must have a much greater reliance on law enforcement activities. And it must be deployable in self-contained and self-supporting

packages from company to division level.

A good starting point is LTC Demarest's proposal for a Utility Division to beef up our capabilities at the low end of the spectrum. This division would consist of a brigade of each of the following; military police (MP), military intelligence, engineers, aviation, and a combined arms combat. The MP brigade would be designed for widespread police patrolling, for interrogating and housing prisoners, for controlling crowds, and for investigating relevant charges. The intelligence brigade would be structured around human intelligence (HUMINT) capabilities, with emphasis on its capability to develop overt community intelligence support. The engineer brigade has the traditional capability to construct paved roads, improve airfields, install potable water systems, and build public use structures. The aviation brigade needs sufficient lift to support remote civic action and humanitarian projects and to support the combat brigade. Finally, the combat arms brigade would have approximately one-fourth the combat power of a light division. It would consist of a battalion each of motorized, airborne, and air assault infantry, as well as a battalion of artillery and a cavalry squadron.³⁰

Although radically different from current division structures, this utility division (or one similar to it) could be designed around the nucleus of our current light infantry division headquarters. It could use active component or a mix of active and reserve component soldiers. During mid- to high-

intensity operations it could provide rear area security, population control, as well as the lead role in the increasingly important post conflict activities stage.

This unique organization would be very decentralized. Therefore, it would pose a number of thorny issues. For example, it must have a command and control system capable of deploying numerous different sized packages, from companies on up. Each of these packages must have the capability to sustain themselves. The specialized nature of these organizations would require different development patterns for our officers and noncommissioned officers. And then we must overcome the traditional branch parochialism about who controls them.

Although this option is the most radical in terms of restructuring and re-thinking about how we should organize and operate, it may offer the most potential for the most likely use of forces in the near term (five to fifteen years). It may allow us to assume a moderate degree of risk during these austere budget years without completely derailing our modernization efforts.

The last option that should be examined is the mix of active component/reserve component forces. This is always an option when discussing force structure changes. There is a growing recognition that some of our reserve forces have lost their relevance so their very existence is in jeopardy. This is borne out by the recent desire of National Guard leaders to restructure combat organizations into combat support and combat service

support in order to save them. And, as mentioned before, there are some who advocate shifting part of our heavy combat forces to the reserve in return for additional combat support and combat service support soldiers on active duty. There are many possibilities that could be examined in this area but they are beyond the scope of this paper.

The third option of creating two separate organizations (an MRC-high and an MRC-low) has the most merit. We should pursue it aggressively. The infantry must take the lead in seeking such reorganization; we must get ready to restructure in a bold, audacious manner. We should design these two organizations to function based on an active duty end-strength of 400K. Then we could add to this base structure depending upon world events and fiscal realities. This implies a willingness to take calculated risks as well as overcoming branch parochialism.

Many of our professional journals are providing emerging insights into how we should change. But there are many in our midst that refuse to budge from the experiences and lessons drawn from Desert Storm. They continue to focus on heavy, conventional forces to the exclusion of low-intensity operations--even though the preponderance of evidence suggests that this will be our most probable use of forces. They refuse to acknowledge that "salami slice" budgetary and structure cuts will cripple us--designing a force that is either inappropriate or incapable of addressing future conflict.

In conclusion, change in our infantry structure is

inevitable. The infantry of 2010 will be smaller, more lethal, and technologically superior to our present force. Although required to function with less money, it will have a much broader array of missions. It will have a larger percentage of forces devoted to the lower end of the conflict spectrum. Changes will be driven by lack of a peer competitor and changes in the motivation, nature, and size of potential threats. Fiscal realities will demand previously unacceptable risks. The question for us in the infantry is--do we want to drive the changes or just react to them?

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